

FDD-PST

From: Sheila Sheridan [SheridSh@collier.k12.fl.us]
Sent: Wednesday, March 29, 2000 1:58 PM
To: Fdd-pst@fns.usda.gov
Cc: vantreg@doacs.state.fl.us
Subject: Comment about CORE

I am the Director of Food Service for a mid-sized (33,000 students) school district in Florida. I have had the opportunity to review the materials sent out about the Commodity RE-Engineering Program and the report entitled "Food Distribution 2000".

While I concur with many of your findings, I have several concerns with "the process". The program does indeed need improvement and there are several points in the report that are very good. We DO need to streamline the paperwork and reporting requirements, a better system for the "hold and recall" of products, national umbrella contracts with processors and a revision to the delivery system that allows trucks only two stops.

I have concerns about the "full substitutability" of commodity products in processing contracts. You state that this creates advantages for industry. That it does, but few advantages to the recipient agency. How will we know when foods of lesser or questionable quality are substituted? How will we know if they were non-domestically grown and under less than optimal conditions? If commercial labels are used, how will we know when we even received a commodity? Our county does not currently process commodities because the cost is high and the yield of the end product is often so low.

Will bonus commodities still be available? Because we still "scratch cook", we have been able to utilize many of the foods that are taken off the market as part of the price support program. Will the DOD continue? WE love it!

As to the "predictability" of the delivery of products, this is my 25th year in the Child Nutrition Programs. While I have always counted on the Planned Assistance Level (PAL) promised by USDA, I have always tried to look at commodities as a "serendipity". We do not plan on getting them and are always thankful when they arrive, no matter what we get. This works well and we are never disappointed. We always exceed our PAL because of the bonus commodities and our program is solvent, almost to the dollar of the PAL. We plan our menus AFTER we receive the arrival notice that the commodities are in the commercial warehouse and use them the next quarter.

If you have received lots of complaints about the Commodity Distribution Program then someone needs RE-Education to understand the nature of it.

It works just like the stock market. Maybe you just have to be in there for the "long haul" to realize the benefits.

Please continue with the suggested changes for anything that will streamline paperwork, delivery, recalls and communications but before you make significant changes in product specifications, labeling requirements and/or processing requirements, please survey some of us "old timers" in an effort to get more input. We don't want to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

Sincerely,

Sheila Sheridan, Director
Department of Food Service
District School Board of Collier County (FL)